

Meeting Report, Strategic Planning Retreat (Adopted 12/16/2009)

Frederick County Sustainability Commission

November 18, 2009

3:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

The Lucy School, 9117 Frostown Road, Middletown, MD

In attendance: Don Briggs, Steve Chafitz, Annmarie Creamer, Lisa Gaver, Mark Lancaster, Margie Lance, Rich Maranto, Lisa Orr, Winifred Palmer, Kim Roberts, Fred Ugast, Janice Wiles

Others in attendance: David Gray and Kai Hagen of the Board of County Commissioners; Vicki Brown, Director of the Lucy School; Hilari Varnadore, staff

Call to Order

Chairman Briggs called the meeting to order just after 3:00 p.m. The school was in the process of dismissing students so the green building tour started a bit late, closer to 3:20 p.m.

Green Building Tour

Vicki Brown led the Commission around the school's recently completed Primary School building, which is going through the US Green Building Council's LEED certification process. She hopes that the school will obtain the highest rating, LEED Platinum, and be the first to obtain it under the new LEED for Schools program.

Goal Development

The Commission reviewed the 11 most pressing sustainability challenges that were prioritized using the surveymonkey.com tool in advance of the retreat and converted them into goal statements. The challenges were consolidated into the 7 goals that are expanded on throughout this report.

Solutions Development

Once the group agreed to the 7 goals, they took time to brainstorm solutions that would work to obtain each goal. They listed solutions on sticky notes and placed them on sheets around the room. Once everyone's ideas were up on the boards, one or two members worked to begin grouping the items into like categories.

Goal Guardians

Two commissioners were identified for each theme to serve as Goal Guardians. They agree to work with staff to take each theme to the next level, seeking input from stakeholders, and prioritizing strategies and actions that will achieve the goals.

WATERSHED & ECOSYSTEM HEALTH

Goal Guardians: Janice and Winnie

Goal 1: Protect and restore the biological integrity of Frederick County's natural environment.

Data collection and mapping

- Research the diversity of native zoological species and botanical species
- Conduct a County-wide tree canopy survey
- Create inventory of green infrastructure assets in County
- Map out critical environmental assets and green infrastructure

Analysis and indicators

- Prepare list of 10 most endangered green contiguous areas in Frederick County
- Map critical green infrastructure and make a plan to protect it through planning

Create a green infrastructure plan for Frederick County.

- Create a green infrastructure plan that is used as a guide for future development
- Develop a plan that will increase the diversity of native plant and animal species
- Support County's development and implementation of green infrastructure plan

Protection and restoration

- Protect wetlands and greenways
- Develop policies to promote contiguous green infrastructure by landowners
- Maintain forested areas, with special attention to contiguous forests
- Protect stream corridors, enhance forestation, wildlife corridors & hubs, Potomac & Monocacy streams
- Increase tree plantings in sidewalks, medians and along public right-of-ways
- Implement sustainable landscape maintenance practices throughout the County
- Remove invasive species; set more aggressive targets to manage invasive/exotic species
- County should participate fully in gypsy moth control
- Protect and restore ecosystems and their functions (from Ag)
- Protect physical environment (from Ag)

Enforcement

- Better enforce litter laws! Have hotline to report and support signage/outreach like "Don't mess w/Texas"

Education/outreach

- Educate community about native/invasive species
- School involvement in identifying conservation of R, T, E species
- Engage students & community members in invasive species removal projects
- Educate public about negative impacts of tossing cigarette butts

Governance

- Build an office of environmental management that pulls environmental personnel of the County together

Goal 2: Protect the quality and quantity of surface and groundwater sources with respect to local and Chesapeake Bay watersheds.

Water resources assessment

- Implement surface water protection plans for sub-watersheds
- Identify 5 biggest sources of groundwater contamination and develop remediation plan

Identify and implement Best Management Practices

- Mandate nitrogen removal systems for new/replacement septic systems in karst terrain
- Increase protection of local watersheds
- Identify, create and promote list of best practices for property owners regarding water conservation
- Provide local initiatives for water conservation
- Ramp up protection of recharge sources around Catoctin Mountains, less development, stronger septic codes, karst protection, Potomac and Monocacy streams lead into the Chesapeake Bay
- Bring Frederick County into EPA TMDL discussion for pollution reduction targets

Watershed Restoration

- Support and expand “buffer in a bag” program
- Promote, install, and maintain buffer plantings for waterways
- Utilize FRO money to plant Riparian (restoration)
- Make a plan to plant trees along all stream corridors
- Make a plan to protect areas and corridors of green infrastructure through existing planning strategies, programs, etc

Non-Point Source Pollution

- Discuss with Health Department potential public health issue of faulty septic systems and high nitrogen content
- Control/limit the use of herbicides and pesticides on open land
- Stronger ordinances to limit pesticide and fertilizer application on lawns and agricultural lands
- Reduce runoff of fertilizer, road salt, roadside litter and litter in storm drains
- Limit use of residential pesticides
- Address issues of spreading manure on fields and run-off into streams following rain storms
- Move farms towards organic/sustainable practices
- Promote the return of grass-fed cows
- Keep cows out of creek, support PGM to hasten work

Education/outreach

- Establish baseline of degradation of waterways in county and rank endangered tributaries from most threatened to least
- Establish Annual County Water Quality Report Card for waterways and groundwater contamination
- Create a water resources guide that identifies the critical water resources of the County
- Increase participation in Potomac River Watershed Clean-up and Big Sweep type clean-ups
- Educate students and community on home water conservation practices
- Educate the public on amount of pollution Frederick County contributes to Chesapeake Bay Watershed
- Education to stop disposal of medications in water systems
- Promote water conservation in residential and commercial use
- Promote the use of water conservation fixtures and appliances
- Educate and promote viable poop-to-power options for farms to use cleaner by-products for spreading on fields
- Provide soil samples at reduced rates to educate homeowners about nitrogen footprint

- Promote and educate people about value of rain barrels
- Rain garden education, installation and maintenance (seek grants and develop program)
- Engage students and citizens County wide in water quality monitoring

NEIGHBORHOOD AND COMMUNITY DESIGN

Goal Guardians: Kim and Lisa O.

Goal 1: Encourage the design of green, environmentally responsible neighborhoods and communities.

Promote Green Neighborhood Designations

- Use LEED-ND to develop guidelines for communities
- Research and establish a pilot “Green Community” program with a municipality or unincorporated area
- County to provide incentives for homebuyers who buy homes in responsible communities; will force developers to build well-planned communities
- Establish enterprise zones with incentives – lower fees, taxes, streamlined plan review
- Promote environmentally sensitive development that makes economic sense.
- Build green affordable housing communities
- Policy with economic incentives for living close (electric, water, sewer rates higher the further lines or pipes are from home)
- Prioritize infill development

Development Review, Codes & Planning

- Advocate for comprehensive sustainability measures to be incorporated into community and redevelopment plans
- Redesign the Golden Mile to connect shopping centers and parking lots – make more walkable
- Incentives to local builders to redevelop and infill
- Require pervious paving in residential and commercial applications
- Explore modifying building code to minimize compaction, lessen overall footprint and planting native SPP
- Legislate zoning which will require greenspace, water management, etc.
- Plan development around green infrastructure
- Incentivize permeable pavement in all new and renovation projects
- Promote rain gardens in parking lot and development construction

Stakeholder Education

- Work with HOA’s to develop and promote the green community challenge
- Educate developers about green infrastructure and how it can help with planning
- Promote success stories from across the US to local builders and developers
- Promote programs that encourage people to start community gardens

Low Impact Development/Onsite stormwater mgmt

- Increase on-site storm water treatment
- Research and install pervious pavements for roads, sidewalks and parking lots
- Promote Native Landscaping at all county facilities
- Encourage Green Roofs

Goal 2: Make Frederick County bike and pedestrian friendly.

- Lobby for full implementation and funding of Bikeways and Trails Plan for Fred City and County through Transportation Maryland
- New development will be planned and given priority based on public transportation and pedestrians.
- ~~Make Frederick County bike and pedestrian friendly.~~
- Install and map a connected bike/trail path system.
- Install traffic calming where needed.
- Work with municipalities, larger neighborhoods and communities to strengthen and create pedestrian oriented mixed-use centers
- Make sure sidewalks are adequate for ped's.
- Get \$ to train groups and volunteers to build trails – like the CCC

Other transportation-related ideas:

- Public bus system cooperates with FCPS and serves both. See rest of the world.
- Determine if our public transportation system is adequate.
- Bring Zip Car like program to Fred Co.

RENEWABLE ENERGY AND ENERGY CONSERVATION

Goal Guardians: Fred and Rich

Goal 1: Accelerate adoption of renewable energy technologies by homeowners, businesses, government and agriculture.

OR

Goal 1: Increase the use of renewable energy and decrease the use of greenhouse gas- and pollution-emitting energy sources to improve public health and reduce greenhouse gas and air pollutant emissions. (this would combine the two areas . . . just food for thought)

Incentives

- Provide tax incentive for building a zero energy home
- Provide incentives for renewable energy adaptation
- Provide incentives for renewable energy
- Consider adoption of renewable energy property tax credit for solar, wind or geothermal

Funding Options

- Identify funding sources for energy audits & energy efficiency tax incentives
- Develop property attached Clean Energy Loan (PACE) program to allow property owners to finance conservation and renewable energy projects
- Offer free or low-cost energy audits (grants??)

Education

- Bring Green Building Institute trainings to Frederick Co.
- Encourage and promote the use of energy audits and the HERS rating system
- Initiate an energy efficiency campaign – get businesses to turn off computers @ night, install light sensors, etc.
- Educate homeowners on the benefits of investing in proper energy efficient improvements to their homes. Show payback on investment calculations.
- Educate on available tax credits, incentive programs, and economics of not using renewables.
- Educate about renewable energy options.
- Target farmers with renewable energy education programs (cost/benefit)
- Showcase alternative/renewable technologies through expos and home tours
- Demystify hurdles to renewable energy

Regulatory Changes

- Zoning changes that encourage energy farms
- Rules and regulation changes to allow approved compost spread on ag land
- Modify codes as needed to support small windmills, digesters, etc. for farms and homeowners

Innovative/Pilot Projects

- Establish pilot programs for installation of solar on county/BOE owned buildings through PPA model with private financing
- Develop a pilot community renewable energy installation using solar or wind power
- Research viability, options, zoning, etc. for collective installation of solar panels, wind mills for small towns, cooperatives, etc.
- Encourage existing rooftops to borrow solar panels and share credit power with lender
- Research, educate, promote effective digesters and other “poop to power” technology for farmers

- Have county take the lead with renewable energy technologies on county buildings
- Educate and promote viable poop to power options for farms (digesters, etc) (from Ag)

Goal 2: Energy Conservation (need to develop a goal statement . . .)

Energy efficiency and conservation

- Support and promote Volunteer Frederick's Energy Action Corps and Low Carbon Diet conservation program
- Cost/benefit analysis of transitioning to LED lighting in county facilities
- Provide a list of energy auditors in Frederick County and promote the value of audits to citizens
- Provide low/no interest loans for energy conservation upgrades – charged back to the property tax bill.
- Work with local nonprofits to help fund replication of Green@Home program to bring energy efficient supplies to low-income families
- Promote the use of Clean Currents when it comes to Frederick County through Allegheny Power
- Big "Conservation First" community education program
- Incentives for EE upgrades and retrofits
- Work with FCPS to develop energy efficiency awareness program
- Develop an Fred Co Energy Use Report Card and publish results annually
- Develop Fred Co citizens challenge to participate in energy monitoring and reduction at home using earthaid.net or comparable tools
- Fast track or simplify the permitting process for energy efficient buildings (residential and commercial)
- Address light pollution and install energy efficient street lights

AGRICULTURE AND FOOD
Goal Guardians: Lisa G. and Sally

Goal 1: Protect, secure and enhance Frederick County's agricultural land uses, rural culture, farming economy, and related agri-business.

Reduce development pressure/land use issues

- Increase ag conservation payments
- Expand/promote development easements, purchase of development rights, and other programs to support retention of farmland
- Strict development protection for farm area, offer more incentives to farmers
- Parks in farm business – keep them out of ag business
- Property tax credits for ag preservation and ag buildings
- Limit small lot development along scenic county roads
- Consider establishment of TDR regime for areas under development pressure
- Zoning enhancements – fit “new” ag enterprises (energy farms, bed and breakfasts)
- Research and address deer management issues
- Economic impact of deer, changes to cropping patterns, ecosystem health

Protect/promote our local farm economy

- Work regionally in the state to advance farm interests
- Promote the county as a leader in providing food and agricultural products for our local and greater community
- Promote economically viable crops to support local food production for humans beyond corn and soybeans
- Study profit margin of farming families and where support/change is necessary
- Promote niche farming
- Zoning enforcement – must grow 80% to sell on ag land; enforce to encourage new ag enterprises
- Serve as a vehicle to connect farm/ag interests – producer, retailer, consumer, educator
- Involve Fred Co young people in farming
- Encourage farm viability
- More \$ and staff to build cadre of young farmers (lobby for \$\$)
- Study % of FC product that is exported and why
- Farm economy/viability
- Address farmer retirement \$
- Tax burdens for agriculture tremendous
- Incentivize sustainable ag practices (no till, organic, permaculture, integrated pest management)
- Incentivize and promote ag business
- Don't regulate farms/farmers out of business
- Expand permitted land uses in agriculture zoning

Goal 2: Establish Frederick County as a leader in sustainable, local food systems.

Create a local food supply rather than long-distance foods that need to be shipped

- Promote organic farming practices, farmers markets, community-based agriculture, weekly food packages
- Investigate creation of local food/fiber distributor
- Increase use of local and organic foods in FCPS (and all county government functions)
- Develop a campaign to promote the benefits of buying and eating local food
- Educate the public about value of supporting locally grown food

GREEN BUILDING PRACTICES

Goal Guardians: Mark and Margie

Goal 1: Implement sustainable practices in existing & new buildings.

OR

Goal 1: Increase the energy efficiency and environmental and human health performance of the public and private (commercial, residential and industrial) building stock.

. . . to reduce operating costs, protect and enhance occupant health, and lower overall energy use intensity of buildings.

Incentives

- Establish incentives for green retrofits
- Incent new buildings with green building
- Put certified energy efficient buildings in a separate class of properties for local taxation
- Property tax incentives for GB standards
- Density bonuses to developers who build to high efficiency/performance standards

Education/outreach

- Create an awards program for green building projects and developments.
- Create a voluntary green building pledge with FCBA
- Educate homebuilders on green building
- Replicate Annapolis' Sustainable Stewardship program for all types of businesses and homeowners
- Green Building Institute training to Fred Co
- Develop best practices for renovation contractors to incorporate into their projects
- High profile demonstration project with East Frederick Rising
- Emphasis on life cycle costs (initial investment and maintenance cost +operating cost + disposal)

Building energy performance

- Select and require third party sustainable inspection
- Consider establishment of insulation inspection in building inspections
- Require energy audits of homes/buildings prior to transfer of sale
- Possible resolution requiring green building technologies and LEED certification for new commercial construction and renovation projects
- Adopt zero net energy building construction and zero net energy retrofit target
- Require energy conservation in all county buildings
- Evaluate and promote legislation dealing with green issues
- Establish requirements for builders to have new homes HERS rated and require publishing of HERS rating for each house
- Adopt an existing measurable standard for decreased energy usage in all buildings (new and existing)
- Support local builders who may be challenged economically when implementing the 2009 IECC standards

WASTE & RECYCLING
Goal Guardians: Steve and Annmarie

Goal 1: Divert waste from the landfill “Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, Compost”

OR

Goal 1: Establish a community goal of zero waste. Set interim goals and policies that minimize the volume and toxicity of all waste produced and maximize reuse, recycling, and composting of waste materials.

Legislation and County Actions

- Ban cardboard from the landfill!
- Mandatory public event recycling
- Impose “Pay as you Throw” for landfill- homes and business
- Adopt-0-Waste
- Promote biweekly pickup
- Consider development of voluntary Pay-As-You-Throw program for trash collection
- Recycling will be mandated throughout the county, both residential and commercial
- Have all county buildings, schools, etc be required to recycle
- Require commercial business recycling
- County Endorse DO NOT MAIL registry in state 2010 legislation package to reduce bulk mail
- Require all public and government functions practice waste reduction and diversion
- Require C & D diversion/reuse recycling
- BOE- get all FCPS to recycle and compost

Materials-Specific concepts

- End of life product management
- Work toward a policy of elimination of plastic bags and the use of Styrofoam
- Demolition materials recovery
- Promote environmentally friendly purchasing
- Use water efficient technologies

Education and Promotion

- Educate community on importance of recycling
- Encourage municipalities and HOA’s to reduce trash pick up to once a week
- Partner with non-government organizations, i.e.: Freecycle, etc
- Develop markets and distribution for county produced compost
- Make recycling as convenient as possible
- Encourage businesses to reduce materials used in packaging
- Educate Facilities Management staff at colleges, large businesses, and government about how to make recycling less of a burden and more of a benefit

Implement new programs

- Develop and promote a construction waste management and recycle program
- Have County Free Cycle Site- building materials, etc
- Find markets and install new recycling programs for: textiles, carpet, vegetable/food oil, Styrofoam
- Create a commercial materials exchange
- Construction and Demolition recycling, promote it , develop new program

- Multi-Family recycling on site, provided by County or property manager
- Recycling pickup for businesses! Recycling pickup for multi-family dwellings
- Promote and instigate community “Freecycle” events

Composting

- Encourage composting of organic waste by businesses
- Remove organics from waste stream and develop a composting program
- Food recovery programs
- Encourage and facilitate composting of animal (food) wastes
- Establish a composting program for restaurants and other food businesses
- Fast Food- encourage recycle and compost
- Start collection of organic waste from households and business for composting, sell resulting compost
- Compost education
- Pilot program for and grocery food composting
- Promotional campaign for home food waste composting

Hauling and Collection

- Get haulers to charge residents per trash pickup not per month
- Encourage haulers to reduce trash pickup to once every two m(or more) weeks

GREEN BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

- Establish a Frederick County Green Business Program. Companies can be identified as green businesses by meeting certain criteria.

Issues/ideas for follow up:

- How the Commission can/should respond to time sensitive and emerging issues
- Strategy for stakeholder engagement; develop a policy for how we implement this; want to make friends before we need them
- Where does energy conservation fit in?
- Address life cycle costs
- Build community understanding of the triple bottom line and help define sustainability to Frederick County residents (explain cradle to cradle and cradle to grave)
- Link land use and transportation planning more closely with sustainability goals.
- Decrease community and county organization carbon emissions, including decreasing fossil fuel use 50 percent by 2024.
- The Commission's role in ensuring Frederick County government stays accountable for its sustainability initiatives.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned shortly after 8:00 p.m. Members assisted staff in cleaning up and loading materials in vehicles. We were on our way by 8:30 p.m.

Thank you to The Lucy School for offering free space for the retreat and to The Main Cup for their great service.

Meeting report was adopted as minutes for the November meeting of the commission. Lisa Orr motioned to approve as presented. Annmarie Creamer seconded the motion. All voted in favor, 12-0-0-1 with Steve Chafitz absent.